

Managing School Stress

Remember that old adage about “is the glass half-empty or half full?” Well, that one’s not going to help you manage either high school or college stress. What you have is a full year in front of you, but it can be a year full of success or a year full of stress, depending on your plan!

One of the functions of education is to challenge you and in so doing, prepare you for the challenges of life after school. Learning to be effective in managing student stress will carry you a long way towards managing stress over your lifetime.

The secret to high school and college stress management is organization.

- **Look at school as your temporary business.** You can’t run an office without supplies. Keep a good supply of paper, pencils, pens, folders, and binders on hand and develop a filing system so you know where things are.
 - **Special tip to reduce high school stress:** Keep your locker clean and well organized. It will help you keep on time and unflustered.
- **When businesses need help, they find it.** If you need help with a subject, don’t be afraid to find a tutor. Teachers and professors may offer limited help, but are more likely to be a resource to assist you in finding either extra materials or a tutor.
- **Plan your work and work your plan.** Schedule time for homework and stick to your schedule unless a real emergency (fire, flood, famine) gets in the way. If you need a break after school, take it and schedule homework time later in the evening. Remembering that the opposite of stress is relaxation, just be sure to schedule both!
 - **Special Tip: Don’t let work build up to clutter up your weekend.** Although you may choose to work on all or part of a Saturday or Sunday, do make one of them your “day off”. You’ll find that facing the coming week is much easier when you’ve had real time to refresh!
- **Learn to prioritize.** You can probably whip up that essay in a flash, but how about that 15,000-word term paper? Get done for tomorrow what needs to be done. Then use the rest of your scheduled study time to 1) work on long projects or 2) read a chapter (or even a few pages) ahead.

- **Choose u-friendly subjects.** When a project allows you to choose the subject matter, choose according to your interests, not what you think will impress the teacher or get a good grade. Aside from making school work more enjoyable and less stressful, good grades come from good work and we do our best work when we enjoy what we're doing.
- **Cramming is a great way to become cramped!** It's a necessary evil sometimes, but you can avoid physical aches and pains (stressors) and creative blocks by taking a five-minute break after each hour of study. Also, when working at a desk or table, make sure that your chair is at a comfortable height and firmly supports your back.
- **Be on time.** Unless you have a pretty thick skin, classroom snickers and teachers' glares are bound to make you uncomfortable. Discomfort = Stress.

Exams: College Stress to the xxxth power — tips to cut it down to size!

1. **Find out as much as you can about the exam.** Take advantage of any practice tests.
2. **Study for the type of test.** Multiple choice exams usually are fact, formula, and data infused. Essay tests usually require you to have a handle on the subject and possibly go into detail on a topic or two.
3. **Know where you're going.** Don't take it for granted that your exam will be given in the "usual" place. Many tests and exams are given in large, possibly off-campus facilities. Make sure you know the location, down to the room number!
4. **Get organized the night before.** Load up your bag or briefcase with everything you think you'll need, including aspirin, a snack, water, calculator, eyeglasses... Well, you know what you need!
5. **Eat before the exam.** There may not be the time or opportunity to eat a snack during it. Aside from making you feel tired, an empty stomach can also make you anxious and shaky.
6. **Dress for success.** Whether you run hot or cold, the room may be out of your comfort zone. Wear a light layer of clothing next to your skin and a comfortable sweater or jacket that you can shed if unnecessary.